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ABSTRACT

Three documents are presented which describe the Australian Open Learning Information Network (AOLIN)--a national, independent, and self-supporting network of educational researchers with a common interest in the use of information technology for open and distance education--and discuss two evaluative studies undertaken by the organization. The first document, "AOLIN, A Network for Educational Researchers," defines the network and describes its aims and policies, relationship with Telememo (Telecom Australia's electronic messaging system), development policy and operation, and membership. The second document, "AOLIN's Telememo Evaluation Project," presents the aims and objectives of a project commissioned by Telecom Australia whereby AOLIN will assess Telememo as a national service and present recommendations on ways of improving service. The third document, "A Deakin Project on Computer-Based Communications," presents information about a project designed to investigate the human, technical, and cost issues in computer-based communications used by a group of committed educators, and to develop recommendations for the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University. (KM)

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AOLIN

AUSTRALIAN OPEN LEARNING INFORMATION NETWORK

The role of the
Australian Open Learning Information Network

The Steering Committee of AOLIN (ed)

AOLIN, Australia, 1986.

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CONTENTS

Robin Bishop & Angela S. Castro	AOLIN, a network for educational researchers
Lee R. Stirzaker	AOLIN's Telememo Evaluation Project
Paul H. Northcott	A Deakin Project on Computer-Based Communications

AOLIN, A NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS

Robin Bishop & Angela S. Castro

What is AOLIN?

AOLIN (Australian Open Learning Information Network) is a national, independent and self-supporting network of educational researchers with a common interest in the use of information technology for open and distance education. Members use Telecom Australia's electronic messaging system, Telememo, to exchange news and views and share a range of services developed on a cooperative basis.

The aim and objectives of AOLIN

The aim of AOLIN is to promote information technology using computers and public telecommunication utilities for teaching, research and administration.

AOLIN's objectives are:

- 1 Personal development in the use of information technology

AOLIN wishes to give all members an opportunity to learn together about the basics of computer-based communications involving public packet-switched networks. While some members may have already gained such an experience, there are many who have not.

- 2 A clearing-house of information on information technology research

There is so much published and unpublished literature on information technology in general that it is virtually impossible to keep track of even a reasonable proportion of it. AOLIN, nevertheless, wants to make available, through the cooperative efforts of its Steering Committee, members and supporters who are among the most active of researchers in Australia and overseas some of the information of particular interest and relevance to Australian educational researchers.

- 3 Evaluative studies

AOLIN supports systematic evaluations of topics relevant to the aim of the Network and is prepared to assist AOLIN members and organisations wishing to do so on the understanding that the findings are made available to its members and other interested people or organisations on a cost-recovery basis.

Telememo and AOLIN

AOLIN is registered with Telememo as a corporate user. A corporate account on a public utility like Telememo with 24-hour access facilitates exchange and sharing of information by people with a primary, common interest.

This advantage also carries a commitment on the part of AOLIN members to use such a service and pay for it. The standard Telememo charges, terms and conditions of service are shown in the appendix to this document.

AOLIN members are given a Telememo User Name. This enables them to receive and transmit messages to other AOLIN members and Telememo users, and to use the telex and other special Telecom services if they are required and requested. Sending to national and international PSDN will be possible in due course.

Non-AOLIN members, however, are not permitted to access AOLIN as a network. This means that while some educators are already Telememo users, they cannot participate in AOLIN activities unless they have registered as AOLIN members.

Development policy and operation of AOLIN

The development policy and operation of AOLIN rest with a Steering Committee comprising four members elected because of their knowledge, expertise and commitment about computer-based communication and its educational applications. Their office does not carry any remuneration. Their titles, names and responsibilities are as follows.

The Chairman (Angela S. Castro, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia) is responsible for all aspects of the Network, including national and international liaison with other common interest groups, negotiation with Telecom Australia, and the promotion of AOLIN in Australia and overseas. She looks after membership enrolment and processing and is the Administrator for the AOLIN account with Telememo.

The Systems Manager (Robin Bishop, Department of Education, New South Wales, Australia) deals with urgent messages sent to AOLIN by general members on problems encountered with using Telememo. As Deputy Chairman of AOLIN, she also helps in the financial operation and promotion of AOLIN.

The Database Manager (Lee R. Stirzaker, Computer Centre, Deakin University until 1 August 1986) assists in the collection of significant documents transmitted through the Network and puts them on databases for access by members. He negotiates with Telecom Australia on software development necessary for AOLIN's administration, operation and evaluative studies.

The International Adviser (Paul D. Bacsich, Open University, United Kingdom) reports on significant international

developments in information technology for educational use, especially in electronic mail, computer conferencing and X.400 systems. His particular contribution lies in helping AOLIN develop a strategy in international networking.

The operational base of AOLIN resides in Deakin University in the first two years, that is, between 1986 and 1988. The Chairman of AOLIN will review the collaboration with the Chairman of the Distance Education Unit at Deakin and report to the Steering Committee before July 1988 with her recommendations.

The Chairman of AOLIN supervises the financial operation of the Network. Signatures of the Chairman and the Systems Manager are required for equipment purchases or contractual arrangements necessary for the administration of the Network.

Membership of AOLIN

Educational researchers from all organisations with an interest in information technology and open learning are invited to apply for membership of AOLIN, which will be collectively considered and processed by the Steering Committee.

Annual membership fee is A\$50. There is also a once-only registration fee of \$20. A copy of the application form for people wishing to apply this year (1986) is appended to the present document.

People applying in 1986 are encouraged to take up a two-year subscription to enable them to participate in two important evaluative studies (see below). For people doing that, there will be an exemption of the registration fee, so the total amount they have to pay for the two-year subscription will only be \$100.

Overseas researchers interested in applying for membership of AOLIN are requested to contact two members of the Steering Committee after they have looked into the situation of public packet-switched networks in their country. People in Europe and North and South America are advised to contact Dr. Paul Bacsich at the Faculty of Technology, Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, United Kingdom, and those in Australasia are advised to write to Lee Stirzaker care of Angela Castro at Deakin University, Victoria 3217, Australia.

All registered members will receive AOLIN subsidies to meet the initial Telememo charges. This will enable them to get acquainted with the messaging system. Members participating in the two evaluative studies will receive further assistance.

Registered members receive a quarterly invoice for their account with AOLIN, which includes the Telememo charges as

well as a fixed, monthly contribution of \$2 to AOLIN. This and the membership fee are to help the Steering Committee manage the Telememo corporate account which carries a basic charge of \$300 per month, pay for the bulletin boards, develop and maintain bibliographical and other databases which all members can access and capture for reference (but not for resale).

Two evaluative studies

The Steering Committee has agreed to undertake two evaluative studies for Telecom Australia and the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University.

Telecom Australia has asked for an independent study of the Telememo service from the expert and general users' point of view and some preliminary investigations about linking Telememo to existing tertiary mail networks.

Deakin, on the other hand, wants a broader study to assess the use of computer-based communications for a joint course development support network. Dr. Peter White of La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia has joined the Steering Committee in carrying out this Project.

Both studies will take two years and members participating in the studies will have an opportunity to receive copies of the final reports.

In accordance with the design of both studies, people accepted in 1986 for a two-year membership will receive some assistance with call and storage charges while on Telememo.

The Steering Committee will consider applications from AOLIN members for support of other evaluative studies.



AOLIN members

Paul Bacsich, Robert Brownlee, Angela Castro, Robin Bishop, Tony Bates

APPENDIX: APPLICATION FOR AOLIN MEMBERSHIP

Instruction on completing the application

- 1 First study the Telememo charges and the terms and conditions of the Telememo service on the next two pages.
- 2 Then complete the Application Letter and Questionnaire No.1 on User Profile.
- 3 Return both to Angela Castro, Deakin University, Victoria 3217, Australia. Mark "AOLIN" on the envelope.

If applicants in Australia have any problem or query, please do not hesitate to contact Angela Castro in Geelong (Tel. 052-471255) or Robin Bishop in Sydney (Tel. 02-3398436).

Membership fees

Annual membership commences on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. AOLIN will accept applications received after 1 September but the membership period remains the same as given.

Annual membership fee is \$50. There is also a once-only registration fee of \$20. People accepted for a two-year membership beginning in 1986, however, will have the registration fee waived and receive some assistance with Telememo charges for taking part in the two evaluative studies.

There is a fixed monthly contribution of \$2 to AOLIN which will be added on to a member's quarterly account.

Allow ten days for membership processing, after which successful applicants will receive a Telememo User Name, a temporary password, a Telememo package, and some AOLIN information about user training and assistance with costs.

Telememo charges

The following information was supplied by Telecom Australia in a document dated 1 November 1985. Additional notes with reference to AOLIN have been added in certain categories of charges.

REGISTRATION FEE Aust \$

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| a | For an individual mailbox service, i.e.
if you register directly with Telememo. | 25.00 |
| b | For a business service, e.g. AOLIN | 200.00 |

CALL CHARGES

a Connect time

Per minute or part thereof:

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| * | 8 am to 6 pm A.E.S.T Monday to Friday
(AOLIN members are charged \$0.15 per min.) | 0.20 |
| * | All other times | 0.15 |

b Usage time

Per 1000 characters or part thereof

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| * | 8 am to 6 pm A.E.S.T. Monday to Friday
(AOLIN members are charged \$0.01) | 0.02 |
| * | all other times | 0.01 |

STORAGE CHARGES

a In the case of a message which has not been read or filed:

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| * | For the first 5 days after lodgement | Nil |
| * | Beyond the first 5 days after lodgement,
per 1000 characters or part thereof per day | 0.005 |

b	In any other case, per 1000 characters or part thereof, per day	0.005
---	--	-------

CALL TO A TELEX SERVICE

Per minute or part thereof:

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| * | 8 am to 6 pm A.E.S.T. Monday to Friday
(AOLIN members are charged \$0.30) | 0.40 |
| * | All other times | 0.30 |

MINIMUM CHARGES PER MONTH

The minimum basic charge applies when the total value of the basic charges is less than the minimum basic charge. This means that if Telememo is not used at all or regularly in a particular month, an account holder still has to meet the minimum basic charge.

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------|
| a | For an individual mailbox service | 33.00 |
| b | For a business service | 300.00 |

TELECOM TELEMemo SERVICE

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. The Telememo service is provided by Telecom subject to the customer's acceptance and continued observance of the terms and conditions hereinafter set out and the Telecommunications (General) By-laws.
2. The customer warrants that all details set out on the face of this agreement are true in every particular and undertakes to immediately notify Telecom of any changes in any such details.
3. Telecom shall use its best endeavours to ensure the continuity and efficiency of the Telememo service at all times but shall not be held liable for any loss or damage, consequential or otherwise, arising out of any failure of the Telememo service however caused, including any default, delay, error, omission or loss, whether negligent or otherwise, in the transmission, reception, use or storage of programs, files, records or data.
4. The customer hereby indemnifies Telecom and shall keep indemnified and save harmless Telecom from any loss, damage, liability or expense arising from libel, slander, invasion of privacy, infringement of copyright, patent, confidence or privilege or breach of any laws or regulations whatsoever arising from the material transmitted, received or stored via the Telememo service and from all other claims arising out of any act or omission of the customer or any unauthorised use or exploitation of the Telememo service.
5. The customer shall be responsible for the procurement and maintenance of customer terminal equipment, except where such equipment is provided by Telecom and a Telecom maintenance service is available.
6. The customer shall take all reasonable precautions to protect the integrity of the passwords associated with his use of the Telememo service.
7. Charges, pursuant to tariff determinations, shall be rendered upon the customer in accordance with Telecom's standard charging procedures.
8. The customer acknowledges and comments on the fact that the Telememo service will provide to other Telememo customers, free of charge, access to an electronic directory listing containing basic mailbox information of all Telememo customers.
9. The customer shall not use the Telememo service in any manner which in the opinion of Telecom, may adversely affect the use of the Telememo service by other customers in the interests of the Telememo service as a whole. The customer shall comply with any directions, given to it in writing from time to time by Telecom, as to the manner of using the Telememo service.
10. Where Telecom permits a customer to be responsible for the administration of his Telememo service the customer shall :
 - (i) be permitted to define his own organisation's hierarchy
 - (ii) be responsible for registering and deregistering with Telecom the customer's organisation's users onto the Telememo service
 - (iii) determine which Telememo facility each user may access and arrange the training of those new users, and
 - (iv) provide a user's support system.

PROVIDED ALWAYS under no circumstances will Telecom permit a customer to connect users to the customer's Telememo Service from outside the customer's own organisation, unless the customer is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Telecom that there exists a bona fide business relationship, temporary or otherwise, between the customer and the proposed user, and further that the said usage of the Telememo service is solely directed to the discharge of the particular business relationship in question.

11. Telecom may, without prejudice to any other right, claim or action it may have against the customer, immediately and without notice discontinue the Telememo service if the customer breaches any of these terms and conditions or any of the provisions of the Telecommunications (General) By-Laws.

Application Letter

To Mrs. Angela Castro,
Chairman, AOLIN,
c/o Deakin University,
Victoria 3217,
Australia.

Date:.....

Dear Angela,

I have read the document AOLIN, A NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS and would like to apply for one-year/two-year (delete whichever is inapplicable) membership of AOLIN.

I enclose a cheque for \$70/\$100 (delete whichever is inapplicable), crossed and paid to AOLIN, and undertake to pay my AOLIN account promptly, and to observe the terms and conditions of the Telecom Telememo service. I understand that non observance of the above may result in the termination of my membership by the Steering Committee of AOLIN.

I have completed Questionnaire No. 1 on User Profile as requested.

Signature.....

Name and title (print or type)

.....

Postal address and telephone no. (with area codes) for all membership correspondences. Please print or type.

.....

.....

.....Tel. no.....

Questionnaire No.1 on User Profile

Please complete and return the questionnaire together with your application letter. For new users of computer-based communications, please consult a computing colleague with some communication experience to help you with the more technical questions, or telephone Angela Castro on 052-471255.

AOLIN needs the details to enable it to assist you more efficiently in case of access problems and to use them as background information for the two evaluative studies for Telememo and Deakin University. The details will be held in a confidential directory on Telememo and is available only to the Steering Committee. Please print clearly or type.

- 1 SURNAME: GIVEN NAMES (full):
- 2 TITLE (Mr., Mrs., Ms, Dr., Prof.):
- 3 SEX:
- 4 OCCUPATION (if you work in an educational institution, please specify if it is an academic appointment or a general appointment):
- 5 NAME OF ORGANISATION OF WHICH YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE:
- 6 HOME ADDRESS (OPTIONAL) AND POST CODE:
- 7 OTHER PERSONAL ELECTRONIC ADDRESSES e.g. Viatel, Prestel, Minerva, Telecom Gold, Telememo, Telemail, ACSnet, ARPA, UUCP, JANET etc.:
- 8 HOME TELEPHONE NO. WITH AREA CODE (OPTIONAL):
- 9 DO YOU HAVE A SECOND TELEPHONE AT HOME?

10 TELEPHONE NO.(WITH AREA CODE) AT WORK :

11 DATA TERMINAL EQUIPMENT (DTE) TO BE USED MOST FREQUENTLY FOR YOUR ACCESS OF AOLIN ON TELEMemo:

a What is the name and brand of your computer system?

b What is the operating system (give version, if any)?

c What is the name of your communication software (e.g. KERMIT, Crosstalk, Macterminal, PC-Talk, etc.)?

d Do you use a line editor to compose your text offline or do you use a wordprocessing package to do so?

e If you use a wordprocessing package, give its name.

f If you use a modem, what is the brand name and maximum speed? Please specify if (i) it has a split rate and (ii) it is full-duplex, and (iii) it has auto answer capability.

g If you use an acoustic coupler, what is the brand name and maximum speed?

11 LOCATION OF, AND ACCESS TO, DATA TERMINAL EQUIPMENT (DTE)

Delete any statement which is inapplicable:

a I have DTE in my office for my frequent use.

b I have some access to DTE at my place of work.

c I have DTE at home.

d I have some access to DTE.

12 EXPERIENCE WITH COMPUTER-BASED COMMUNICATIONS

Please give yourself a rating by circling only the appropriate number in a and b.

- i means no experience whatsoever
- ii means some experience
- iii means considerable experience and technical expertise, eg. electronic mail management, PAD configuration, etc.

a Using electronic mail: i ii iii

b Using public packet-switched networks: i ii iii

13 HELP WITH COMPUTER-BASED COMMUNICATIONS:

Delete any statement which is inapplicable:

- a There are people at my place of work who can help me with problems.
- b There are people outside my place of work whom I can call on for help with problems.
- c There is no one I can call on for help.
- d I seldom need help.

14 MEMBERSHIP FEES AND TELEMemo CHARGES:

Please circle the appropriate number for a and b.

- i means I am paying for myself.
- ii means my employer is paying for me.
- iii means my employer and I are sharing the costs.

a Membership fees i ii iii

b Telememo charges i ii iii

15 HAVE YOU PLANNED ANY SPECIFIC PROJECT THAT WILL BE HELPED BY YOUR BECOMING AN AOLIN MEMBER? PLEASE EXPLAIN BRIEFLY.

16 IF YOUR APPLICATION IS SUCCESSFUL, DO YOU WANT YOUR NAME LISTED ON THE TELEMemo USER DIRECTORY SO THAT OTHER TELEMemo USERS CAN FIND AND CONTACT YOU?

17 DO YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO SEND TELEXES ON TELEMemo?
(Please note that this is not immediately available.)

18 PLEASE SUPPLY THE OFFICIAL ADDRESSES OF YOUR
ORGANISATION (OR DEPARTMENT)

Postal (with area or zip code):

Telex:

X.25:

Viatel:

Prestel:

Telememo:

Telemail:

Minerva:

Telecom Gold:

Facsimile:

Others (Please specify)

19 INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRAL COMPUTING SYSTEM IN YOUR
ORGANISATION

- a What is the operating system?
- b Have you got a user directory on the central computing system?
- c If you have a user directory, what is the usage quota?
- d Has the central computing system got a leased line to a packet-switched network like Austpac or Midas?
- e If it has a leased line to a packet-switched network, are you a permitted user?
- f Is there a Local Area Network?
- g If you have not got a Local Area Network yet, is there one planned?
- h Is your central system in any mail network (e.g. ACSnet, CSIRONet, JANET, DECNET, etc.)?

AOLIN'S TELEMemo EVALUATION PROJECT

Lee R. Stirzaker

The aims of the Telememo Evaluation Project

The Steering Committee of AOLIN regards the undertaking of the Telememo Evaluation Project commissioned by Telecom Australia as significant for two reasons.

First, the Committee has chosen Telememo as the messaging system for AOLIN members because of its capabilities and potentials; it is in the interest of AOLIN, therefore, to thoroughly assess the overall performance of Telememo and see if it lives up to expectations.

Second, it regards the commissioning of the Project as a manifestation of a genuine wish on the part of Telecom Australia to improve its new service. The Steering Committee does not share the cynical view that the Project is just a marketing ploy on the part of Telecom Australia. Paul Bacsich, Angela Castro and I have published a number of papers together on the use of computer-based communications in an institutional situation for teaching, research and administration, and we have made some comments on some associated problems brought on by the success of Australia's two public packet-switched networks. We believe that Telecom Australia is determined that similar problems will not plague the development of its new Telememo service.

The Telememo Evaluation Project, therefore, will benefit both Telecom Australia and AOLIN members, who will have the unique opportunity of "being listened to" and making suggestions to Telecom Australia to improve its product.

The aims of the Project are therefore to make:

- 1 A thorough assessment of Telememo as a national service from the expert and general users' point of view; and
- 2 Recommendations to Telecom Australia on ways of improving the Telememo service.

The objectives of the Project

The Steering Committee, the expert users and the general users of AOLIN will examine:

- 1 The system capabilities of Telememo. For example,
 - * Mail;
 - * Bulletin boards;
 - * Inform scripts; and

- * Information management.
- 2 The user interface of Telememo, for example:
 - * HELP facilities;
 - * HOTLINE facilities; and
 - * Terminal/microcomputer support.
- 3 The printed literature of Telememo for general and expert users. We refer to:
 - * The publicity document: An introduction to usage.
 - * The set of three booklets, issued to all users.
 - * The Pocket guide, issued to all users.
 - * The Interim User's guide, with limited circulation.
 - * The Inform script guide, with limited circulation.
 - * The Administrator's guide, with restricted circulation.
- 4 The auto-delivery, direct delivery, and interconnecting system services offered by Telememo.

Evaluation

We shall take a scientific approach in the main by electronic monitoring of all AOLIN usage of Telememo and by statistical analyses of records and data supplied by Telecom Australia.

To facilitate general feedback from AOLIN members, we will use the following quantitative and qualitative methods:

- * The use of a postal survey at the initial stage to generate a user's profile.
- * The use of a small set of electronically delivered and received short questionnaires at intermittent intervals to investigate user perception of specific aspects of the Telememo service.
- * The encouragement of general messages on Telememo or by post to the Administrator of AOLIN from users to allow a free and open-ended evaluation of the Telememo service.
- * Analyses of urgent messages sent to the Systems Manager of AOLIN requesting for assistance with problems encountered while accessing Telememo.
- * A limited use of telephone interviews and a teleconferencing session with a small and select group of users for a specialised and qualitative evaluation of the Telememo service.

The funding of the Project

There will be no actual monies involved.

Telecom Australia will provide some assistance with programming, database design, accounting procedure and other necessary charges. The Steering Committee will contribute, in some cases, personal time and data terminal equipment, and some proceeds from AOLIN membership subscriptions and contributions to meet the dataprep input, printing, postage and other administrative costs necessary to undertake and complete the Project.

The Telememo corporate account has been designed for users belonging to one business organisation and has therefore presented some problems for the design and implementation of the Telememo Evaluation Project and the Deakin Project. For example, our members are scattered around Australia and there is also a small number of overseas members. Therefore we cannot easily give hands-on training sessions, show a video film, or even talk to them; everything has to be done at a distance. We are hence grateful to be given the endorsement and support of Telecom Australia in the research and development phase of our Network, and to the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University for providing a base during the first two years of AOLIN's operation.

Reporting procedure

The Project will take two years (1 August 1986 to 31 July 1988) and the Project Team is the Steering Committee of AOLIN (Angela Castro, Robin Bishop, Lee Stirzaker and Paul Bacsich). The Chairman of AOLIN, Angela Castro, will submit two interim reports (in two copies) to Telecom Australia in February and December 1987 and a final report (in five copies) on behalf of the Project Team.

Some additional information

The Steering Committee wishes to make known certain assumptions that it holds with regard to the introduction of information technology. These assumptions, reached after other investigations into electronic mail and closely interwoven into the design of the Telememo and Deakin Projects, are:

- 1 People will use information technology if they are shown how.
- 2 People will use information technology if they are given certain financial assistance initially.
- 3 People will use information technology if they have some one to talk to.
- 4 People will use information technology if they have something to talk about or are given some worthwhile, additional facilities (apart from being merely able to talk to other people).

In the first year, therefore, we put our members in a controlled environment where:

- a We will help them find out about electronic messaging and mail management.
- b We will give them some subsidised use of Telememo to get them acquainted with the service.
- c We will introduce them to one another.
- d We will provide, as the operation of the Network gets under way, some special facilities, eg. a condensed TERC Update service edited by Lee Andresen of the University of New South Wales, a bibliographical database on telecommunications edited by Peter White, a databank of research papers by various authors and offered through Angela Castro.

We hope, therefore, that by the end of the first year, the majority of AOLIN members will have become experienced, committed users with good habits and skills.

In the second year, assistance will be reduced if deemed appropriate. In other words, the environment will be less controlled and members will be in their "natural electronic habitat" and be able to more effectively use the skills acquired and a growing range of services developed on a cooperative basis.



[Photograph. Lee Stirzaker accessing a remote system via Austpac with Deakin colleagues and Dr. Paul Bacsich.]

A DEAKIN PROJECT ON COMPUTER-BASED COMMUNICATIONS

Paul H. Northcott

Project aims

This Deakin Project on Computer-Based Communications is an evaluative study of the kind specified in the aim and objectives of AOLIN. It is to investigate the human, technical and cost issues in computer-based communications used by a group of committed educators, so that some recommendations can be made to the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University about the feasibility of using such a means of communication for joint course development by writers or consultants who are geographically apart.

The Project will endeavour to provide answers to the following key questions:

- 1 What are the participants' views on computer-based communications from the interactive perspective after they have had substantial experience in using an electronic messaging system?
- 2 What sort and level of training are necessary for the less technically competent educational user?
- 3 Do users of such a means of communication develop certain protocols, attitudes or working strategies not normally associated with the more conventional means of communication?
- 4 What sort and level of technical support are required to make this means of communication attractive for the educator?
- 5 What are the costs incurred by the user in terms of equipment outlay and telecommunication charges?

Answers to the above key questions and the recommendations derived therefrom will assist the Distance Education Unit in the design of a support network for a course team of writers using mainly or only this means of communication.

Project Team

Paul Bacsich (Faculty of Technology, Open University)
Robin Bishop (Department of Education, New South Wales)
Angela Castro (Distance Education Unit, Deakin University)
Lee Stirzaker (Computer Centre, Deakin University until
1 August 1986)

Peter White (Centre for the Study of Educational Communications and Media, School of Education, La Trobe University)

Angela Castro has been appointed the Project Leader.

Paul Bacsich is a consultant and writer on the Information Technology course team at the Open University. He heads the Cyclops Research Group which developed the Cyclops Tutorial system and is the designer of Optel, the private videotex system of the Open University. His interests are in advanced videotex systems, computer conferencing, expert systems and satellite transmission. His more recent involvement at the Open University is in electronic publishing. He was a Visiting Fellow in the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University from February to March, 1986.

Robin Bishop, a Technical Development Officer of the Department of Education, New South Wales, is based in the Correspondence School in Sydney. She has been active in the application of electronic mail and videotex in communicating with isolated students. In 1985, she was seconded to Canberra to be a research officer on the Australian Education Council Task Force on Education and Technology. She will be able to bring much insight into the areas of policy planning and staff development.

Angela Castro is an academic member of the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University. She has had considerable experience in instructional design, bibliographical, indexing, editorial work as well as computer-based communications. She believes in the future of home-based education and the convergence theory in technological applications. In recent years, she has been active in the investigation of the technical design, application and operational aspects of computerised bibliographical databases, network communications and videotex.

Lee Stirzaker, senior analyst and network manager at the Computer Centre, Deakin University, is a technologist with programming and X.25 network expertise as well as an interest in satellite and videotex research. Together with Angela Castro and Paul Bacsich, Lee has been investigating the access, human factor, and technical issues in computer-based communications via public packet-switched networks in an institutional setting, and has co-authored a number of papers on these issues. His more recent responsibilities are mainly to do with UNIX systems, LAN and X.400 protocols.

Peter White, Head of the Centre for the Study of Educational Communications and Media at La Trobe University, is a well-known and respected researcher in educational technology and telecommunications (landline and satellite), author of the ACEUCT Resource Guides, and a member of the Victorian National Working Party on Telecommunications in Tertiary Education. He is knowledgeable about the thinking behind the

research and development direction of government and public utility polices in telecommunications.

Duration of the Project

The Project will take two years, from 1 August 1986 to 31 July 1988, at the end of which a final report (in 30 copies) is to be submitted by the Project Team to the Distance Education Unit. The submission of the interim reports (in two copies) to the Unit is the responsibility of the Project Leader; and this is to take place in February and December 1987.

Evaluation

The evaluation is to take the form of a continuous process using mainly electronic means, supplemented by a limited use of the more conventional postal and telephone surveys. This means a greater degree of network environment control in the initial stage of the Project.

Members of the Australian Open Learning Information Network (AOLIN) will be advised about the Project at the time of their registration. They will assist the Project Team by providing their personal views for some Telememo sessions in messages sent electronically or by post and by completing a short series of simple questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions.

As a corporate user, AOLIN is provided with certain usage statistics by Telememo which will be used in the evaluation. Some of these will be made available to the Project provided that they do not jeopardise the development and operation of the Network.

The Project will not violate the confidentiality and privacy of AOLIN members.

A description of the context of the Deakin Project

The rationale and academic relevance of AOLIN are outlined in a paper by Angela Castro and Paul Bacsich. This paper was presented to an invited group participating at a Workshop on Media and Telecommunications organised by the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University for the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association on March 14-15, 1986.

The concept of AOLIN as an independent, national network for Australian educational researchers in information technology has since received a great deal of attention from people working in both traditional and distance-teaching universities, colleges of advanced education, technical and further education colleges, educational departments, and business organisations which offer professional updating

courses for their members. These people, from Australia and overseas, want to be able to exchange information and share their experiences on a wide range of educational activities using the new technologies. AOLIN has been formed as a result to enable such a common interest group of people to get together.

Telecom Australia has endorsed the concept of AOLIN and offered its support during its development phase. It has commissioned an independent evaluation of Telememo by the Steering Committee of AOLIN.

The Distance Education Unit has offered AOLIN its support for a period of two years while the Network is being developed by the Steering Committee and chaired by one of its researchers. This collaborative support will be reviewed by the Chairs of AOLIN and the Distance Education Unit before July 1988.

It is within this general framework of support that the Deakin Project on Computer-Based Communications is proposed by the Distance Education Unit at Deakin University. The key questions posed by the Project reflect the many contemporary concerns in Australia about the use of educational technology, especially at the tertiary level for undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The Project will have particular relevance for some of the topics on technology in the proposed Master of Distance Education program which Deakin plans to offer.

Funding of the Deakin Project

AOLIN members participating in the Project are charged the normal Telememo costs, but AOLIN will subsidise some of those costs in line with the requirement of the Project design because the questionnaire completion will incur extra telecommunication costs on the part of the respondents. The Project Team does not require Deakin assistance with their telecommunication costs.

The Distance Education Unit at Deakin will:

- 1 Appoint a part-time consultant to write the necessary software for administering the Project. The amount is not to exceed \$3000.
- 2 Appoint a casual, part-time dataprep operator to key in the programs and data. The amount is not to exceed \$2000.
- 3 Provide the use of computer systems with communications software and hardware.
- 4 Provide staff resources, including forty per cent of Angela Castro's time, and secretarial assistance; and

- 5 Meet postage and printing costs associated with the Project.

Any equipment purchased with the funds of the Distance Education Unit is an inventory item of the Unit and remains as Unit property during the duration of the Project. Purchase of the equipment by AOLIN at the conclusion of the Project in 1988 is negotiable. Any appointment of casual staff is the responsibility of the Chairman of the Distance Education Unit.

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